

My success as a man is not measured by my accomplishments in business, nor wealth I've attained, but by the love I have received, and done my best to give back in return.

I was born into a world of poverty, violence and drug addiction. As the son of a Black man and a white woman I never felt as though I fit in anywhere. But I learned early on you can't stand out and fit in at the same time. As a musician who has amassed billions of streams, sold millions of records and performed in packed arenas around the world, I can attest that none of those things bring true happiness to an individual. Yet this pandemic of envy and negative self reflection through social media has run rampant, and none of us are immune, myself included. After ten years in an industry built on "enough" that's exactly what I had. Enough.

We are told as human beings that we aren't enough. For me it was, "you're not street enough, tough enough, cool enough, black enough, rich enough... just not good enough," but I am enough! And so is every human being in this world. In 2015 I took a tour bus to go from LA to NYC where I showed up to fans' homes and surprised them by playing an album that was set to release in two weeks. I sat with them, spoke with them, ate dinner with their families, and the statement that recurred with almost every single visit was "your music saved my life." I walked away from the experience thinking "my music saved a life? I never even tried to save a life." You see, my music had always been made from a therapeutically selfish place. The world told me, in my life, I wasn't enough. I wrote lyrics looking into a mirror. "I'm gonna get up today, I don't know how but I'm gonna find a way" and "you can't have sunshine without a little rain, you can't have joy without a little pain." But little did I know simple lyrics like these, and so many more, had the power to save lives. So after these encounters with fans all across North America and eventually the world, I asked myself "what if I actually 'tried' to save a life? What if I actually wrote a song for the fan who wants to kill him or herself? Perhaps it could sway their decision of implementing a permanent solution to a temporary situation. And on a winter's day in 2017 I wrote the song 1-800-273-8255.

I didn't write it for fame or notoriety. I mean, let's be honest here. I don't think anybody was going "hey this song about killing yourself is about to tear the club up." I did it for the same reason I've always made music. To spread a message of peace, love and positivity. Tupac Shakur said, "I'm not saying I'm gonna change the world, but I guarantee that I will spark the brain that will change the world." And just like I use the j Dilla Mantronix horn in my music to keep James Yancy's spirit alive through my own music, that statement by Pac has been like a torch passed to me to do my best to spark the next generation of thinkers. But how can that generation even think when the conversation alone on mental health has been taboo. Men have been made to feel the tears god gave them to release emotion is a shameful event. I am but a humble servant in the movement that is mental health activism. And I am here to say that I, myself, at the height of my career, performing a song about the prevention of taking your own life, was met day in and day out with intrusive thoughts of taking mine. But then I thought to myself,

Well if the 1-800 guy Kills himself, I'll become a meme, so I stayed alive out of spite. That's a joke. But they say behind every joke there's a bit of truth. I didn't persevere because of spite. But I did continue so I could fight. Fight the negativity of the world, just as these people fight. I stayed alive because I believe there is more good in this world than bad. We just focus on that negativity because it's ingrained in our genetic code, from walking down the street to subconsciously seeking out negative comments. Thousands of years ago a human being walked out of the jungle and stepped foot on the open plain. He/she didn't look up at the sky and say "oh wow it's so beautiful" He/she peered across the land first searching for predators, to ensure he/she could enjoy the beauty of the sky in peace.

There are lions in the pockets of damn near every man, woman and child on the planet. There are lions that bully us, yell at us, and do everything they can to destroy us. But deep down inside those lions, like the rest of us, are pure in spirit like the cub they once were. Some are Mufasa, others are Scar. But we all started as cubs. And the evils in the circus of a planet we call earth have done everything they can to tame us. And make us fear them.

When the cub is young, this giant lion tamer cracks his whip and towers over the shaking cub, acting stronger and meaner, scarier than the little baby. And as the baby grows into a beautiful creature of unfathomable force and power, he still gazes upon his master with the eyes of a cub. Well I'm here to tell every single one of you listening, you are no longer a cub to be enslaved. You are beautiful, kind, sweet and more powerful than you could ever imagine.

Together, we are enough. And just like Ukraine, we have had enough.